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RECENT THEOLOGICAL LITERATURE

EZRA-NEHEMIAH

The basis of all true exegesis and historical construction is a sound text. Textual criticism is therefore always of primary significance where the received text is not reliable. If it fails to do its work, the rest fails too, the exegesis is spoiled, the historical construction worthless. This is certainly true in the books of Ezra-Nehemiah. The most recent commentator, Professor Loring W. Batten,¹ the translator of Guthe's edition of the text in the *Polychrome Bible*, recognizes this: "Many of the critical theories of both the older and newer writers are dependent on the corrupt MT. A reconstruction of these theories is only possible in the light of a thoroughgoing criticism of the text. This needs to go much farther than Guthe's, in Haupt's *SBOT*." So Batten sets out with much diligence and painstaking care to recover the original Hebrew text. He reaches remarkable results. If they can be maintained they are of far-reaching importance for the exegesis as well as for the historical reconstruction of that difficult period in Hebrew history. Let us carefully test Batten's textual criticism, especially in such sections where they represent his own original contributions.

For truly effective textual reconstruction it is necessary to subject the versions to a rigorous criticism before using them as an aid for the recovery of the original Hebrew text. Even the most valuable versions may lead us astray, if we forget this caution. Batten is quite right in emphasizing the importance of the Esdras text, but he is not critical in his use of it.

As an example take his reconstruction of Ezra 3:3 on the basis of Esdras codex B: "For there were gathered unto them some of the peoples of the lands and they *were well disposed towards* [κατωρθώθησαν] the altar and they *helped* them [κατίσχυσαν]," etc. This is a remarkable text giving as it does information directly opposed to that which we get from the other texts. And of course it would be of great historical value if it were tenable. But the B text of Esdras cannot be legitimately translated in this way. Neither κατωρθώθησαν nor κατίσχυσαν bear the

¹ *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*. (International Critical Commentary.) New York: Scribner, 1913.

meaning assigned to them. And even if they did, the restored Hebrew **עזר** = "they were well disposed toward" is not idiomatic, and **עזר** never means "help" in the sense of aiding one in some work. Impossible as these observations make the reconstruction, they are not the special point I have in mind, which is the critical use of the versions. *Esdras has here a conflate text!* The first reading is *καὶ ἐπισυνήχθησαν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων ἐθνῶν τῆς γῆς* = **בָּאִים עֲלֵיהֶם מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ**, the second *οὗτι ἐν ἔχθρῃ ἦσαν αὐτοῖς κατέσχευσαν αὐτοὺς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς* = **כִּי בָּאִיבָה עֲלֵיהֶם כָּל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ**. The words *κατέσχευσαν αὐτοὺς* in heavy type are a variant rendering of **בָּאִים עֲלֵיהֶם**, so that the second reading is itself conflate, **בָּאִיבָה עֲלֵיהֶם בָּאִים עֲלֵיהֶם**, as is shown by the position of *κατέσχευσαν* without *αὐτοὺς* in codex L after *γῆς*. These are thus various attempts to get the clause **פִּי בָּאִים עֲלֵיהֶם מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ** (this is the best reading) into the text; with what (little) success a comparison of the translations of codices A and B of Esdras shows. In reality the clause is not original at all, as not only internal evidence, though this alone would be sufficient, but also its omission in codex B of Ezra show. Its absence in B cannot be due in this case to scribal carelessness. With the breaking down of Batten's textual reconstruction of Ezra 3:3 the basis for his historical construction has vanished (see pp. 24, 109).

Another example is Batten's restoration of Ezra 3:8-10. He bases it again on Esdras. There are two dates given in Esdras, and Batten concludes that one refers to the time of the foundation, the other to the "erecting" of the temple. In reality we have here again a doublet in the Esdras text:

and in the second year when he had	on the first day of the second month
come [to the temple of God,] to	of the second year, when they had
Jerusalem, in the second month.	come to Judah and Jerusalem.

There is, of course, no difference in the two dates, for the special date, "on the first day" or "new Moon's day of the second month," is simply another translation of the same Hebrew original, often the only correct one when the day of the month is not otherwise defined. Batten recognizes that "to the temple of God" is a gloss. The recognition of the doublet should therefore have been simple. But there is another doublet in Esd. 5:55 and 5:56:

55 and they laid the foundation	56 and the [builders] built (<i>ᾠκοδόμησαν</i>)
(<i>ἐθεμελίωσαν</i>) of the temple of God	the temple of Yahweh.

Batten does not see that they are doublets and lays stress on the difference of "laying the foundation" and "building," or "erecting." Unfortunately, the distinction will not hold good as far as the underlying Hebrew is concerned, for Esdras translates בִּסֵּס by ῥοδοδομητο in 5:52 (Ezra 3:6), ἐγέρσει in 5:59 (Ezra 3:11), οἰκοδομήν in 5:60 (Ezra 3:12). In other words there is no reason why ῥοδοδομήσαν in 5:56 should not represent בִּסֵּסוּ , as in Ezra 3:10. The distinction which Batten makes between the laying of the foundation and the building of the temple is therefore untenable.

But leaving aside these observations and adopting for a moment Batten's restoration, we are told that in the second year of Darius, in the sixth month (on this date see below), the foundation was laid by Zerubbabel, Joshua, and their brethren, the priests and the Levites and the other exiles, and on the first day of the second month of the second year of the coming to Judah and Jerusalem they put the Levites from twenty years old upward at the work on the house of Yahweh. Does this mean that Zerubbabel, Joshua, and all the priests and Levites and the other returned exiles laid the foundation in the sixth month of the second year of Darius, and that eight months later (see pp. 106 f.) the work was committed to the Levites who took entire charge of it? That appears to be Batten's idea (see pp. 120 f. where he omits the builders in vs. 10 and makes the Levites the builders). But it seems to me most improbable, even for the Chronicler, who inserted "the builders" in order to escape such a construction. One reason why Batten did not recognize the two dates of Esdras as variant readings is his belief that the original text of the first must be restored to: "in the second year of Darius in the sixth month." But if this is the original text we should surely expect a similar form of date in the second, i.e., "on the first day of the second month of the third year of Darius," rather than "of the second year of their coming to Judah and Jerusalem," if there was a second date in the original text at all. There is much to be said for Batten's conjectural restoration of the date in 3:8. The fact that Esdras^L has ἐπὶ Δαρείου is important but not decisive, for a copyist might have inserted it; the previous story in Esdras had taken place under Darius. The testimony of Haggai and Zechariah is more important. We know that the foundation of the temple actually was laid in the second year of Darius. In Ezra 3:8 we have a conflate reading, as the variant reading of Esdras shows as well as a literal translation of the Hebrew phrase, "of their coming to the house of God, to Jerusalem"—"to the house of God" and "to Jerusalem" are parallels. It is by no means impossible

that the original text read, "in the second year of Darius," לדריוש for לירושלם. This date was changed to the present readings, and the impression was produced that the laying of the foundation took place under Cyrus. Batten's change of דשני, "second," to דששי, "sixth," based on Haggai naturally falls in with the reading "Darius"; the reading "second" was due to the reading "first month" in Esd. 5:52. If this restoration of the original date should prove correct as is quite possible, it is a pity that Batten should have spoiled his discovery by failing to recognize that the present text in Esd. 5:55 is a doublet of 5:54, and by giving us such an unfortunate restoration of Ezra 3:8-10 in other respects. For the straightening out of that textual tangle he has done little aside from the date. Space forbids going into this matter more fully.

Batten trusts the Esdras text too much and does not allow for textual corruption, conflation, and free translation. In Ezra 3:3 he says, "Esd. here offers a quite different text. . . . It is doubtful if this is any improvement" (p. 125). On the preceding page he says of this same Esdras text, "That makes very good sense and paves the way for the following clause, 'therefore' (not 'for'). . . ." In reality the underlying text is not different and the Greek γάρ does not mean "therefore" but "for"! On this last clause Batten says, "Esd. shows a different text," but wherein it differs he does not say. In 3:12b he says (p. 124), "The rest of the passage also is quite different in Esd., καὶ πολλοὶ διὰ σαλπύγγων καὶ χαρὰ μεγάλη τῇ φωνῇ," but this corresponds exactly to the Hebrew. From his remark on 3:11 it may be surmised that it is the trumpets that seem to him to point to a different text. "It may be that Esd. preserves a note of an original story when it says, 'all the people blew the trumpets and shouted.' The whole population participated, making the demonstration more democratic than MT suggests" (p. 122). But an examination of Esd. 5:59-62 (=Ezra 3:11-13) shows that Esdras translated דרירע by "blowing the trumpet" and תרועה by "trumpets."

3:11:	תרועה גדולה	דרירע	Esd. 5:59: ἐσάλπισαν καὶ ἐβόησαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ
3:12:	בתרועה		Esd. 5:61: διὰ σαλπύγγων
3:13:	תרועה		Esd. 5:62: τῶν σαλπύγγων
3:13:	מריעים תרועה גדולה		Esd. 5:62: ἦν ὁ σαλπίζων μεγάλως.

On Ezra 6:12 Batten says, "Esd. here offers a simpler and better text." But the only difference, aside from κύριος for אלהא, is ἐπικέκληται for שכן. How far this simplifies and betters the text is difficult to see.

Moreover the statement, "the Deut. phrase is more accurately given than in MT" (p. 148) should have been exactly the reverse. This manner of seeing in Esdras a "better text" or a "radically different text," when in reality it is not different nor better, is characteristic of Batten. See further his treatment, e.g., of Ezra 3:5; 6:13. Of course, some of these passages are not of prime importance for the historical reconstruction, but others are. And the serious part is that Batten's whole textual criticism is impaired by it. Sometimes he sees a point as, e.g., in Ezra 3:8; 7:11; Neh. 2:8, but its value is spoiled in the process.

In textual criticism as well as in exegesis strict accuracy in the observation of the usage and meaning of words is necessary, else the critic may construct the text, the exegesis, and the history wrongly. Batten argues, e.g., on Ezra 10:15 that "the construction עֲמֹד עַל, 'stood against,' fits in finely with this idea; but we find עֲמֹד used in opposite senses in two successive verses. It is plain, therefore, that if this is the right meaning the two verses are not from the same hand. To express this meaning the author would have used a common and unmistakable word, קִים." Batten has overlooked here that in 10:14 עֲמֹד is used with ל, in 10:15 with עַל, which makes just as much difference in Hebrew as in English. The same author can write "stand for" in one sentence and "stand against" in the next sentence, without feeling under obligation to use, e.g., "oppose" in the second sentence. The unfortunate consequence is that Batten proposes in all seriousness to follow the manifestly inferior reading of $\text{ἐμὲν} = \text{עֲמֹד}$ for עֲמֹד, and on the strength of it to regard it as a genuine fragment of the Ezra memoirs, which "then becomes of great significance" (p. 346).

Another example is in Ezra 5:6, 7. Batten's principal argument for his reconstruction is that פִּתְגָּמָא means "answer," as in vs. 11. But in 5:11 it gets this meaning from the verb הִתְיַבֵּן (cf. vs. 5), while in the other passages, Ezra 4:17; 6:11; Dan. 3:16; 4:14, it does not have the meaning "answer." (In Ezra 4:17 it might mean "answer," but the usual meaning "word" is at least as good.) The question is, could the satrap send a פִּתְגָּמָא to the king? Besides Dan. 3:16; 4:14, the very passage to which Batten appeals, 5:11, shows that the term is used in the sense of "word."

If textual criticism had no influence on exegesis or on historical construction the matter would not be so serious. But Batten himself has pointed out its great importance. An examination of Batten's treatment of the Cyrus' edict will show this even more clearly. Batten

believes that the Cyrus edict in 1:2-4 is not the work of the Chronicler but an authentic document. He shares the common opinion that there is another version of this edict in 6:3-5. Since the two versions differ materially, one or both must be wrong. On internal evidence the Aramaic version in 6:3-5 is rejected and the Hebrew in 1:2-4 accepted. Now the common opinion that we have two versions of the same edict in chap. 1 and chap. 6 does not represent the facts correctly, because chap. 1 gives a formal public edict which was proclaimed all through the kingdom, while chap. 6 gives a memorandum of an official action which was to serve as direction for the royal officials. These are two entirely different things, the one a public edict, the other an order in council. However much they may differ they need not necessarily exclude each other. They may both be genuine as far as this point is concerned. Each must therefore be subjected to scrutiny. Batten is convinced that the text of the edict is not correctly preserved, so he restores it with the help of the Greek versions. If his restoration represents "the original form, many of the objections urged against the edict are removed, although the emendations were not made with that end in view" (p. 64). But in vs. 3 the insertion of לָכֵן, "therefore," simply on the basis of the particle עַל in Esdras^{BAL}, which is evidently merely due to the Greek translator's feeling of the need of a connective particle; the emendation of בְּכֶם, "among you," to בִּחָר, "chooses," even though all the authorities adduced¹ have בְּכֶם; the substitution of הַשֹּׁכֵן, "who dwells" for אֲשֶׁר, "who," after הָאֱלֹהִים, "God," because Esdras^{BAL} translates the relative clause freely by ὁ κατασκηνώσας, as it well might do—all these emendations will hardly commend themselves, irrespective even of the un-Hebraic character of the resultant sentence, מִי לָכֵן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּחָר וַיַּעַל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי עַמּוֹ הַשֹּׁכֵן בִּירוּשָׁלַם. Esdras^L is Batten's basis for reconstructing vs. 4. But Esdras is manifestly a free translation. Esdras' translation of עַם הַנִּדְבָּה by σὺν τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς κατ' εὐχὰς προσε-
 θειμένοις neither represents a different text nor a priestly amplification, but is a free translation, justified by the context. But suppose Esdras were literal. Esdras^{BA} reads ὅσοι οὖν κατὰ [τοὺς B] τόπους οἰκοῦσιν
 βοηθείωσαν αὐτῷ οἱ ἐν τῷ τόπῳ αὐτοῦ, which, retranslated into Hebrew, would be כָּל הַיֹּשֵׁב בַּמִּקְמוֹת יִנְשְׂאוּרֹו אֲנִשֵּׁי מִקְמוֹ

¹ Even 3 Esd. with its free translation *si quis est ex genere vestro* witnesses to it. The reading of GL δὲ προθυμῆτο τοῦ πορευθῆναι, on which Batten's emendation is based, does not presuppose an equivalent in the Hebrew original but is simply the translator's rounding out of the relative sentence, which to him seemed incomplete.

omits the clause **אשר הוא גר שם**, and instead of **הנשאר** reads **הישוב**. Esdras^L differs only by inserting **προσθυμίσθωσαν τῷ κυρίῳ**, which carried with it the omission of the following **οἱ**. Far from being an original part of the Esdras text, the very structure of the sentence shows that this is an insertion, a variant rendering of **הנדבה לבית ה'**; its original form **προσθυμηθεῖσιν** was corrected to **προσθυμίσθωσαν** when it was inserted after **βοηθείωσαν**. We should beware therefore of regarding it as a part of the original text. In the first half of the verse Esdras omits the relative clause, "where he sojourns," and gets rid of the perplexing **הנשאר** by reading **הישוב**. But the resultant text cannot be original either, "for all who dwell in the places" requires a definition of the places, such as the Hebrew gives, and moreover the text, "all that dwell in the places, let the men of his place support him," is impossible. Batten, to be sure, omits "the men of his place," but without any external authority whatever, just as he omits "goods and animals" in the second part of the verse. **הנשאר** is indeed perplexing, for we expect here from the second part of the verse a special reference to those who are too poor to undertake the journey to Palestine and therefore need assistance. Unless **הנשאר** is used here with the special meaning of one who had actually escaped the catastrophe in 586 B.C. and was therefore now old and presumably not self-supporting, we might perhaps think that originally **הַפְּזִירִשׁ**, "poor, impoverished," stood there. Batten's textual restoration of the Cyrus edict in chap. 1 is thus to be rejected at every single point.

Now let us turn to the memorandum of the order in council in 6:3-5. Batten regards it as non-authentic. He omits the building specifications of the temple in 6:3, 4. But what can be his reasons for this? If the measures conflict with other historical facts—though nothing is said of the dimensions of the new temple in Ezra 3:12; Hag. 2:3—that does not necessarily argue against the genuineness of this portion, for the figures might either be incorrectly preserved or have differed actually. There is no reason why Cyrus may not have given such specifications in an order in council. Batten probably felt that such specifications were out of place in a public edict; that may be, but this memorandum contains an order in council and not an edict which was proclaimed all through his kingdom. But in any case, why should Batten omit the section of the particulars about the temple, including the payment of the expenses by the government, when he does not regard the memorandum as authentic but as a late composition? Is there external authority for the omission of parts of it? On p. 60 he argues from these

portions for the unhistorical character of the edict. On p. 144 he omits these very portions and then speaks of his restored text as "the original decree." And indeed he goes so far as to argue that the authorization of the restoration of the sacred vessels which according to his restoration was part of the decree of chap. 6 was also part of the decree in chap. 1 (see also the summary of 1:1-4 on p. 55 where this is mentioned, though it is not in the text of the decree). Does Batten think that "the original decree" underlies 6:3-5 as he has restored it? It would almost seem so, but it cannot be, for he assures us that the writer of Ezra 4:24b to 6:18 "was doubtless ignorant of other sources, and could hardly have been familiar with official documents" (p. 21). Strangely enough the very portion that Batten regards as part of the decree, the restoration of the temple vessels, 6:5—and which, to argue in his manner, was not contained in the other version of the decree in chap. 1—is shown by his own elaborate presentation of the textual facts on p. 143 to be an addition made by someone from 5:14, 15, as the last clause demonstrates. Batten is able to come to the other conclusion only by omitting that tell-tale clause in 6:5.

But the memorandum is only a part of an Aramaic source which Batten regards as historically worthless. His reasons for his distrust of the Aramaic document are: first, that according to the reliable testimony of Haggai and Zechariah Zerubbabel laid the foundations of the temple under Darius and not Sheshbazzar under Cyrus as in Ezra 5:16. I prefer to state the objection thus rather than as Batten himself does when he writes, "The most serious difficulty is the inconsistency with Esd. 4:62 f. that Zerubbabel came to Jerusalem in the reign of Darius carrying with him permission to rebuild the temple" (p. 20). This statement complicates matters by bringing in Batten's ideas about Esd. 4:62 f., which are based on Torrey's untenable assertion that Esd. 4:47-56, 62—5:6 is an original part of the Chronicler's narrative. This point deserves a special investigation the results of which I expect to submit at some other time. It is true that Haggai's and Zechariah's testimony that the foundations of the temple were laid in the reign of Darius is unimpeachable. But let us try to understand the situation in which Zerubbabel *et al* were placed in Ezra, chap. 5. The Persian satrap visited Jerusalem in the second year of Darius I. Zerubbabel and Joshua had begun to build the temple. Tattenai demands to know their authorization for this. Did Darius give it? No, Cyrus! Why then was it not carried out under Cyrus? The answer of the Jews is diplomatic (not wholly truthful). The building was authorized by

Cyrus and was begun directly by Sheshbazzar, and it has been building ever since! This is nothing new, but merely the continuation of a building begun long ago! If the Jews had said to the satrap, Cyrus commanded the building of this temple long ago, but it is only now that we have begun to fulfil Cyrus' decree, they would have ruined their case at the very outset. The objection that the writer would surely have indicated that this was a diplomatic answer is to my mind unwarranted. Why does Batten never even mention this explanation?

The second reason, "the silence of Haggai and Zechariah about interference from any source whatever" (p. 20), is removed by the simple reference to Zech. 4:6-10. Why should Zechariah think it necessary to speak of the mountains of difficulties and assure Zerubbabel that he shall after all be enabled to complete the work which he had begun, unless there actually was interference from some source?

The third argument, that in Ezra 4:1-3, "the Samaritans desired to aid the Jews in building and there is in that story no note of any opposition," is possible only because Batten separates 4:4, 5 from 4:1-5 and because of his remarkable textual reconstruction of Ezra 3:3. After Rothstein in his *Juden und Samaritaner* (1908) had showed the close relation between Ezra 4:1-6 and Hag. 2:10-14 such reasoning should have been impossible. That the opposition of the Samaritans was *purely* political is in view of Hag. 2:10-14 and Ezra 4:1-3 to say the least unlikely. Did they take the rebuff administered to them by Zerubbabel so lightly?

I must bring this review to a close. It is too long as it is. Others will take up other aspects of the commentary into which so much hard, patient, and painstaking work has gone. I thought it wisest to investigate the foundations and to test primarily Batten's own original contributions, i.e., especially Ezra, chaps. 1-6, where, as he himself says, his results show "the greatest divergence from the conclusions of other students" (p. 32).

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THE PROPHET AND HIS PROBLEMS¹

The most conspicuous result of modern criticism, from the religious point of view, is the new interest it has lent to prophecy, as the really creative influence in the onward movement of faith. This interest con-

¹ *The Prophet and His Problems*. By J. M. Powis Smith. New York: Scribner, 1914. xi+244 pages. \$1.25.